DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 113 737 CS 202 323

TITLE	Literature Objectives; Second Assessment.
INSTITUTION	Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo. National Assessment of Educational Progress.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Statistics (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	18p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Assessment of Educational Progress, Education Commission of the States, 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 700, Denver, Colorado 80203 ($1.00, make checks payable to Education Commission of the States)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavioral Objectives; Comprehension; Creative Writing; *Educational Objectives; *Emotional Response; English Instruction; Listening; *Literature; *Literature Appreciation; National Surveys; Reading; Values
IDENTIFIERS	*National Assessment of Educational Progress

ABSTRACT

The literature advisory group--comprised of English teachers at all levels, language arts supervisors, and professionals with a national perspective--convened in March 1972 to begin the revision of the literature objectives which had been created in 1965-66 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In this booklet, literature is defined as language used imaginatively to communicate ideas and feelings, express perceptions, provide interpretations, and present visions of human experience. Literature exists in all cultures at all times and appears in oral, written, and enacted forms. The advisory committee intended that the three major objectives be seen as a sequence of increasingly complex activities. The first objective emphasizes immediate experience with literature--the witness must be aware of imaginative language. The second objective emphasizes the ways in which the observer can participate in an experience with literature, and the third objective emphasizes literature as a cultural phenomenon. Two appendixes list the participants for the literature objectives conference and for the review conference. (LL)

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NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

LITERATURE OBJECTIVES

Second Assessment

National Assessment of Educational Progress
700 Lincoln Tower
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80203
A Project of the Education Commission of the States

CS 202 323

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

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National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1975

This publication was prepared and produced pursuant to agreements with the National Center for Education Statistics, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, with additional funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education. The statements and views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position and policy of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Education or other grantors but are solely the responsibility of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a project of the Education Commission of the States.

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PREFACE

The major goals of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are to make available to the general public and to the educational community comprehensive data on the academic attainments of young Americans and to measure changes that take place in these attainments over a period of time. These data are intended to be useful to the general public and to educators in making decisions about curricula and the allocation of educational resources.

Specifically, NAEP gathers information about the knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes of young people, ages 9, 13, 17 and 26–35, in 10 learning areas. Exercises in the learning areas are administered to approximately 100,000 young people each year.

The first step in NAEP's work in any learning area is to determine which educational objectives are important for young people to achieve. These objectives are identified and defined through the efforts of educators and lay people brought together for that purpose. The final objectives must meet three criteria:

1. They must be considered important by scholars in the learning area.

2. They must be considered acceptable educational tasks by the schools.

3. They must be considered by lay people as desirable objectives for young people to attain.

Once the objectives are identified and defined, questions and tasks—called exercises—are developed to measure how well or to what degree the objectives are being achieved. The exercises are then administered throughout the country to young people selected as subjects by stratified and random sampling. Exercise packages are scored, the results analyzed and findings disseminated through official reports that are distributed through the Superintendent of Documents.

To date, objectives booklets have been published for 10 learning areas. In addition, objectives have been reviewed and revised for reassessment in six areas: reading, science, citizenship, social studies, writing and now literature. All of these booklets are available through the National Assessment offices in Denver, Colorado, at $1 each.

CHAPTER 1

PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPING REVISED LITERATURE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the first national assessment of literature in 1970—71, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) staff contacted a number of educators and asked them to update the literature objectives created in 1965—66. The literature advisory group—comprised of English teachers at all levels, language arts supervisors and professionals with a national perspective—convened in March 1972 to begin the revision.

The consultants began their work with a review of the old objectives and their relationship to the English curriculum of the '70s. They felt that the curriculum was changing rapidly, and the objectives should definitely be revised to reflect an increased classroom emphasis upon personal responses to works of literature. In addition, they felt that national objectives should embrace a wider range of literary works and experiences than the range implicit in the earlier goals. With these general aims in mind, the group assembled a draft of the new objectives.

The first draft of the objectives was further revised and elaborated upon by a subcommittee of the advisory group. When they felt they had arrived at an acceptable statement, they asked the full committee to examine it and make suggestions for further revision.

By June 1972, both staff and consultants felt that the objectives were ready for a major review by teachers, teacher educators, administrators, students and lay citizens. Accordingly, in July NAEP convened a meeting of interested people from each of those groups. The reviewers—carefully selected to represent all levels of language arts instruction, all regions of the country and various minority perspectives—were asked to consider several major questions: Do the objectives identify desirable teaching goals for the schools? Are they important for the country and of value in modern life? Are they explicit and sufficient, and if not, how can they be improved upon?

The participants in this meeting contributed substantially to the improvement of the objectives. NAEP staff incorporated their suggestions into yet another statement and once more asked the literature advisory group to review the changes. In addition, the members of the advisory group shared the objectives with colleagues and solicited their suggestions for further improvements.

The objectives that appear in this booklet, then, were produced by many people, only some of whom are listed in the appendixes. They are concensus objectives, responsive to a variety of viewpoints about the nature of literary experience and the best way to share that experience with America's young people.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND TO THE STATEMENT OF LITERATURE OBJECTIVES

In formulating objectives for the second literature assessment, the advisory committee sought first to define literature. The committee acknowledged the primacy of words—"language," which distinguishes literature from other forms of art such as music or painting—and the special use of language—"imaginative," which distinguishes literature from purely functional and utilitarian kinds of verbal expression. The distinction between literary and utilitarian works is not absolute; it is a continuum. There is, therefore, a progression in the objectives from (I) the literary qualities (which are found in everyday use of language as well as in formal works) to (II) works of literature to (III) bodies of literature. This progression defines the meaning of "language used imaginatively." It is the imaginative play of words, it is the image of a world created with words and it is an interpretation of the world through words.

The committee then sought to identify where and how literature exists. Recognizing that language and imagination are universal, the committee reasoned that literature must be "manifest in all cultures." Recognizing too that language is symbolic and thus transcends the media through which it is transmitted, the committee concluded that literature "exists in oral, written and enacted forms." Finally the committee recognized that literature exists not simply as a written, filmed or taped record but as a transaction between the author and his audience. The emphasis, in these objectives, is on the effect of literature on the witness.

In formulating the three major objectives—"experiences," "responds to" and "values"—the committee sought to describe a set of activities essential to satisfying and humanizing encounters with works of literature. The committee also intended the three major objectives to be seen as a sequence of increasingly complex activities. The first objective emphasizes immediate experience. The witness must, at the least, be aware of imaginative language; he may then seek it; he does not necessarily think about it, name it or digest it. The second objective

emphasizes the ways in which the observer can participate in an experience with literature, and the third objective emphasizes literature as a cultural phenomenon. The committee did not mean to imply that there are three unique ways to experience literature. These three objectives refer to three important aspects of the experience of literature, but the experience of literature was seen as an organic whole.

In defining and elaborating the first objective, the committee sought to emphasize the desirability of awareness in experiencing works of literature. Thus subobjectives were designated for both recognizing and seeking "imaginative uses of language." In providing examples within each subobjective, the committee acknowledged that imaginative uses of language do not necessarily constitute works of literature. On the other hand, fragments of literature appear in everyday experience. Their language contains rhythms, sounds, structures or meanings used imaginatively. It was agreed that some works which are essentially utilitarian—scientific essays, for example—can be treated as literature because their imaginative use of language creates an experience which is valuable in itself. Furthermore, it was felt that imaginative uses of language wherever they exist—even in bumper stickers—contribute to interest in, taste for and understanding of literature.

In formulating the second objective, the committee sought to recognize the validity and worth of various kinds of responses to works of literature. Thus the affective—the emotional—response was designated as a separate subobjective. And it was designated as the first of the three subobjectives because it necessarily precedes the reflective and creative responses. The subobjective concerned with reflective responses was elaborated so as to recognize a wide variety of approaches through which a work of literature can be understood. In formulating the third subobjective, the committee sought to recognize the desirability of creative responses, but did not mean to imply that all encounters with literature must culminate in creativity.

In the final objective, the committee intended to express its hope that by experiencing and responding to works of literature the individual would come to understand the nature and worth of the world of literature. The third objective is expressed in tentative language, in recognition of the fact that different persons, and different cultures, value literature in different ways.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE OBJECTIVES: CYCLE II

Assumptions: Literature is language used imaginatively. It communicates ideas and feelings. It expresses perceptions, interpretations and visions of human experience. It exists in all cultures, in all times and it appears in oral, written and enacted forms.

Objectives

I. Experiences literature—Is aware that literary qualities exist in a variety of forms. Seeks experiences with literature in any form, from any culture.

A. Listens to literature

1. Is aware of literary qualities in oral forms, such as poems, songs, jingles, jokes, nursery rhymes, story tellings, sermons, speeches, advertisements and conversation.

2. Seeks to listen to oral forms of literature whether live or electronically reproduced.

B. Reads literature

1. Is aware of literary qualities in written forms, such as letters, diaries, journals, essays, poems, autobiographies, biographies, histories, novels, short stories, plays, magazines, newspapers, catalogues, posters, advertisements, bumper stickers, tombstones and graffiti.

2. Seeks to read written forms of literature.

C. *Witnesses literature*

1. Is aware of literary qualities in enacted forms, such as plays, skits, operas, musicals, happenings, ceremonial and ritual activities, movies and television productions.

2. Seeks to witness enacted forms of literature whether live or electronically reproduced.

II. **Responds to literature**—Responds to literature in any form, from any culture, in a variety of ways—emotionally, reflectively, creatively—and shares responses with others.

A. *Responds emotionally—Participates emotionally in the world of a work of literature.*

1. Experiences emotional involvement with characters and events in literature.

2. Experiences emotional involvement with the ideas and feelings expressed in literature.

3. Experiences emotional involvement with the language in a work of literature.

B. *Responds reflectively—Understands a work of literature by reflecting upon it in a variety of ways.*

1. Understands a work of literature through its language and structure—Comprehends the literal and figurative meanings of words and sentences in their contexts. Comprehends the ways such elements as images, scenes, characters and the ideas they embody work together to produce emotional effects and convey meanings.

2. Understands a work of literature through its relationship to the self—Understands a work of literature and self by relating them to one another. Relates kinds and patterns of experience in a work to personal experiences and values.

3. Understands a work of literature through its relationship to the world—Understands a work by relating it to aspects of its own or other cultures. Understands a work by relating it to other works of literature, other forms of art and other modes of perceiving experience, such as history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology and theology.

4. Evaluates a work of literature—Evaluates a work of literature by reflecting upon its language and structure, its relationship to the self and its relationship to the world.

C. *Responds creatively—Uses language imaginatively in response to a work of literature.*

1. Enacts a work of literature through oral and dramatic interpretation.

2. Recreates a work of literature through imitation or transformation in any form or medium.

3. Creates literature in any form or medium.

D. *Shares responses with others—Shares emotional, reflective and creative responses in a variety of ways.*

1. Communicates responses to others.

2. Participates with others in responding.

3. Shares works of literature with others.

III. Values literature—Recognizes that literature plays a significant continuing role in the experience of the individual and society.

A. *Recognizes that literature may be a source of enjoyment.*

B. *Recognizes that experience with literature may be a means of developing self-understanding and personal values.*

C. *Recognizes that experience with literature may be a means of understanding the nature of man and the diversity of culture.*

D. *Recognizes that literature and society may influence each other.*

E. *Recognizes that literature may be a significant means of transmitting and sustaining the values of a culture.*

APPENDIX A

LITERATURE OBJECTIVES CONFERENCE—PARTICIPANTS
March 16–17, 1972

Consultants

Kenneth Eble, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah
Daniel Fader, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Edmund Farrell, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois
Arthur Healey, Fort Lauderdale Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Carl Klaus, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa
Charles McLain, Lakewood Senior High School, Lakewood, Colorado
Deloris Minor, Detroit Public Schools, Detroit, Michigan
Alta Norville, Oakland Public Schools, Oakland, California
Philip Ortego, University of Texas, El Paso, Texas
Virginia Reid, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois
Cal Rollins, Institute for American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Donald Seybold, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana
Michael Shugrue, Modern Language Association, New York, New York

APPENDIX B

LITERATURE OBJECTIVES REVIEW CONFERENCE– PARTICIPANTS
July 10–12, 1972

Consultants

Courtland Auser, Bronx Community College, Bronx, New York
June Belker, Community College of Denver, Denver, Colorado
Omar Blair, Air Force Finance Center, Denver, Colorado
Oscar Bouise, Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana
Shirley Doane, Ellington, Connecticut
Marjorie Farmer, Philadelphia Public Schools, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Patrick J. Finley, Wyandotte County Juvenile Court, Kansas City, Kansas
Richard Friedrich, Forest Park Community College, St. Louis, Missouri
Samuel Y. Gibbon, Jr., Children's Television Workshop, New York, New York
Leo Gonzales, Public Defender's Office, Los Altos, California
Sheila Griffin, Los Angeles Public Schools, Los Angeles, California
Clarence Hach, Evanston Township Public Schools, Evanston, Illinois
Mabel Jackson, Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio
Yleen Joselyn, Crystal, Minnesota
Elaine Kono, Hawaii State Department of Education, Honolulu, Hawaii
Virginia Mathews, Association of American Publishers, New York, New York
David Miller, Thomas Jefferson High School, Denver, Colorado
Charles Minor, Eastern Washington State College, Cheney, Washington
Franklin Myers, Scarsdale Public Schools, Scarsdale, New York
Debbie Rice, South High School, Denver, Colorado
Teresa Romero, Abraham Lincoln High School, Denver, Colorado
Audrey Roth, Miami Dade Junior College, Miami, Florida
Robert Scholes, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island
Dorothy Shaw, Denver Public Schools, Denver, Colorado

Imogene Springer, Denver Public Schools, Denver, Colorado
Charles Suhor, New Orleans Public Schools, New Orleans, Louisiana
Nell Thomas, Greenville Public Schools, Greenville, Mississippi
Michael Vargas, North High School, Denver, Colorado
Gladys Veidemanis, Oshkosh Public Schools, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
Ann Williams, Thomas Jefferson High School, Denver, Colorado
Robert Zoellner, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

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Science, Second Assessment (1972)
Citizenship, First Assessment (1969)
Citizenship, Second Assessment (1972)
Writing, First Assessment (1969)
Writing, Second Assessment (1972)
Reading, First Assessment (1970)
Reading, Second Assessment (1974)
Literature, First Assessment (1970)
Literature, Second Assessment (1975)
Social Studies, First Assessment (1970)
Social Studies, Second Assessment (1974)
Music, First Assessment (1970)
Mathematics, First Assessment (1970)
Career and Occupational Development, First Assessment (1971)
Art, First Assessment (1971)

Forty reports, describing National Assessment results in science, citizenship, writing, reading, literature, social studies, music and mathematics, are available through the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

A complete publications list, including prices, is available through the National Assessment offices in Denver.

March 1975